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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

WEST BANK REFUGEES

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CIA/BGI GM 68-3
9 April 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
9 April 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

West Bank Refugees

Summary

The population of the West Bank at the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war on 5 June 1967 included approximately 490,000 indigenous residents and a large group of Palestinian refugees, variously estimated to number between 274,000 and 485,000. Arab sources tend to indicate maximum numbers of refugees, whereas minimum figures are reported from Israel. Estimates from the United Nations generally fall between the two. Because of the June conflict, between 150,000 and 240,000 West Bank people moved to the East Bank. Thus, the exact size of the present West Bank population is unknown.

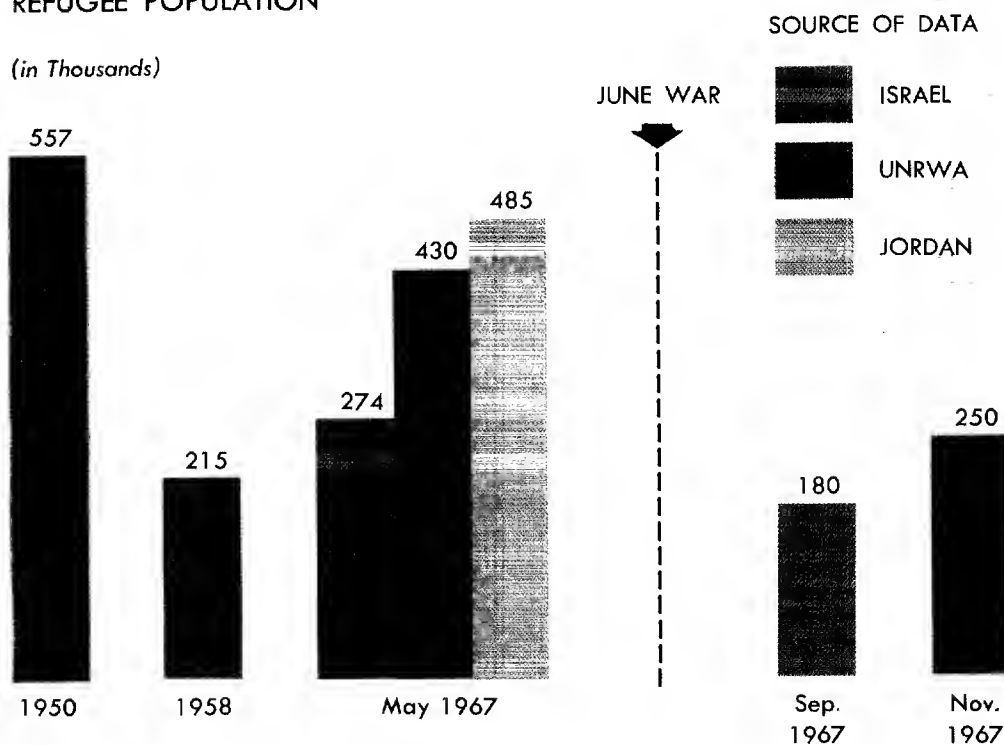
According to Israel's September 1967 census, the West Bank has a population of about 600,000, well above the approximate 366,000 that can be sustained by food produced on the area's 825 square miles of cultivable land. The possible return of more East Bank refugees and the inflow of persons from the Gaza Strip further complicate a situation that is already complex. Over the course of the past 18 years the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has supported almost all of the refugee population. Continued subsidies from this organization or from other relief sources unquestionably will be needed for an indeterminate period.

Note: This memorandum was produced by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of Current Intelligence and the Office of Economic Research. The Office of National Estimates concurs in its principal judgments.

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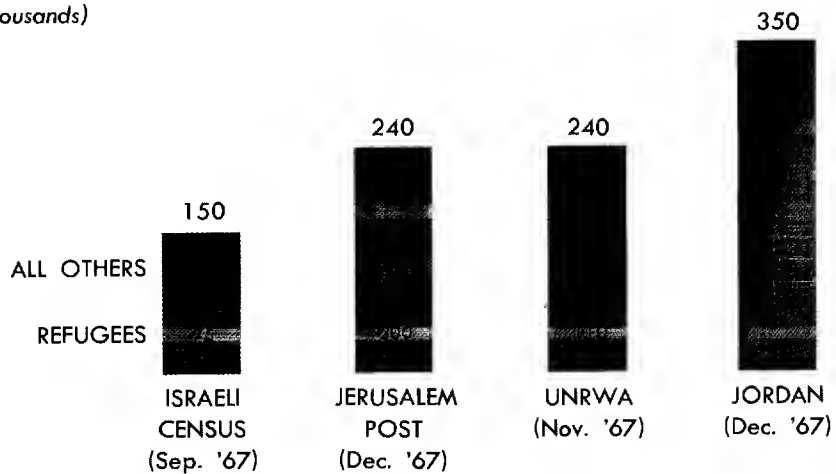
ESTIMATES OF WEST BANK REFUGEE POPULATION

(in Thousands)



MOVEMENT OF POPULATION FROM THE WEST BANK TO THE EAST BANK

(in Thousands)



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The Numbers Game (see Chart)

1. Israel, Jordan, and UNRWA are sources of estimates on the number of West Bank refugees. Israeli estimates generally are low in comparison to those derived from Jordanian sources, and UNRWA figures are usually greater than those of Israel but less than those of Jordan.

2. As of 1950, when UNRWA assumed responsibility for Palestinian refugees from the United Nations Relief for Palestinian Refugees Agency (UNRPR), about 557,000 refugees were registered on the West Bank. Recognizing that the registration rolls were inflated, UNRWA has since attempted to rectify its records; this task is complicated, however, because many deaths have not been reported and because both refugee and Jordanian leaders have not allowed a refugee census to be taken. Refugee leaders have opposed such a census on the grounds that it might lead to a reduction of rations. They assert that refugees are entitled to UNRWA supplies and services as a consequence of their status, without regard to need. Ration cards are their claim on the United Nations until such time as their political demands are met. UNRWA attempts to rectify the ration rolls are thus considered by them to be political issues. The Jordanian Government also has shied away consistently from a census for fear of a violent political reaction.

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In fact, however, a refugee census might reveal that the number of children waiting to be registered for rations could offset unreported deaths. If so, the number on the rolls would not be significantly altered. On the other hand, such a count might indicate the absence of many young adult males -- now on the rolls but gainfully employed outside of the West Bank.

3. Israel's UN Ambassador Comay in 1958 placed the number of Palestinian refugees on the West Bank at 215,000, a figure taken from Walter Pinner's book How Many Arab Refugees?. This source estimated a 27.4 percent population

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growth in 10 years, which projects to about 274,000 refugees in West Jordan by May 1967. This figure is, however, 156,000 short of UNRWA's estimate for this date (430,000) and 211,000 below the official Jordanian estimate (485,000).

4. An Israeli census of the West Bank in September 1967 reported a total population there of about 600,000, of which only 180,000 were considered bona fide refugees. At the same time there were 66,000 people in the former Jordanian part of Jerusalem. One Israeli source states that 60,000 refugees can be quickly integrated into the local economy but 120,000 remain unemployed. This source also indicates that in "normal times" the expanding economy of the West Bank could provide employment opportunities for all presently unemployable refugees. The source does not define the concept "normal times" or indicate the nature of the employment envisioned. Since occupying the West Bank in June the Israelis have been reluctant to become involved in the rectification of UNRWA ration rolls. It is interesting to note that Israel's maximum West Bank refugee figure approximates the UNRWA figure for West Bank ration recipients.

5. In working out population estimates, the Israelis say they used UNRWA's definition of a bona fide refugee -- one who has had normal residence in Palestine for at least 2 years immediately preceding 1948, has lost both home and livelihood because of the 1948 hostilities, is in need, and has residence in one of the countries where UNRWA is working. UNRWA also considers children and grandchildren of the original Palestinian refugees as bona fide refugees, though until the age of 1 year they are not added to the ration rolls. UNRWA disputes the Israeli claim to the use of the same definition. Nevertheless, some of the neediest residents of the West Bank are so-called "economic refugees," persons who retained their homes but lost their fields by virtue of the 1949 armistice line and thus do not qualify for services and receive only half-rations.

6. UNRWA's pre-June and post-June estimates of refugees are not consistent. At the end of May 1967, UNRWA listed 430,000 refugees on the West Bank. UNRWA indicates that 240,000 persons fled from the West Bank -- of which 110,000 were Palestine refugees. The UNRWA estimate of 250,000 refugees

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remaining on the West Bank in November, plus the 110,000 who fled to the east, totals 360,000, which is 70,000 short of the May figure. In part, this discrepancy is explained by the rectification program instituted by UNRWA after the outbreak of hostilities in June 1967.

7. Before June 1967, some 20,000 to 25,000 ration cards, good for 100,000 rations, were in the hands of merchants who drew almost 25 percent of all the rations issued in Jordan. Most of these cards had been purchased or rented from refugees who had either left the area or no longer needed the rations that the cards authorized. Many cards in the possession of merchants were issued to refugees who have since died. Under the new procedures, merchants are not allowed to collect multiple rations, and the system of issuing rations only to card holders permits a more accurate refugee estimate.

Refugee Movement to East Bank

8. The number of persons who actually fled from the West Bank has never been clearly established. The Israeli Jerusalem Post (12 December 1967) indicates that 200,000 persons, formerly registered as refugees in West Jordan, crossed to the East Bank. They were accompanied by an additional 40,000 persons who were not registered. The source of these newspaper figures is not clear, but one Jordanian official indicates a refugee flow equal to that cited. A spokesman for the Jordanian Government, however, places the movement at 350,000 persons.

9. UNRWA estimates of the number of persons departing the West Bank appear to agree with those of the Jerusalem Post, but they are subdivided on a different basis and, when rationalized, become significantly lower. The standard UNRWA figure indicates an eastward flow of 240,000 West Bank residents and 10,000 former residents of the Gaza Strip. They were joined in the June exodus by as many as 100,000 residents of the East Bank who wished to leave the Jordan Valley for fear of Israeli takeover. These figures appear to be inflated by some 35,000 or 40,000 residents of the East Bank who are claiming West Bank residence in order to obtain UNRWA ration cards. In their September census of the West Bank the Israelis placed the number of residents

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who left at 100,000 to 150,000, approximately half of whom were refugees. Of these, somewhat more than 100,000 probably fled eastward in June. They were joined by about 36,000 more during the period July through October, if UNRWA's 300-per-day average is reasonable. (Since the 15 February Israeli-Jordanian incident in which shells landed in one of the East Jordan Valley refugee camps, eastward movement of refugees has begun again from both banks of the Jordan River, with West Bank residents claiming Israeli intimidation.) The return movement westward under the Israel-Jordan-UNRWA agreement, ending 31 August 1967, was just slightly over 14,000. As many as 130,000 originally applied for repatriation. Since the end of August the Israelis have refused to allow substantial numbers of West Bankers to return.

10. Since Israeli and UNRWA discussions did not resolve the discrepancies in their estimates, the Israelis offered to join UNRWA in head counts at ration distribution centers to establish a firm figure. UNRWA did not agree, however, suspecting that after such a count all refugees in excess of the original Israeli estimate may be charged as illegal entrants to the West Bank. On another occasion Israel requested UNRWA assistance in conducting a census of the West Bank. UNRWA agreed, but Israel moved ahead with the census without bringing UNRWA into the operation.

11. Refugees from the Gaza Strip have appeared both on the East and West Banks. According to UNRWA about 20,000 Gaza refugees had arrived on the East Bank as of 15 February 1968 and their number was increasing rapidly. Shortly after occupying the Gaza Strip, Israel announced a plan to move 150,000 refugees from Gaza to the West Bank, particularly to one of the three virtually empty UNRWA refugee camps near Jericho. By 5 February 1968 there were 1,500 Gazans in camp at this location.

UNRWA's Relief Program

12. UNRWA has contributed up to one-fifth of the foreign exchange earnings of the West Bank since assuming the responsibility of providing for refugees in 1950. Its minimum relief program has operated at a cost of \$25 per capita per year, of which approximately \$14.40 is expended for basic

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rations. The remainder is allocated for shelter and services. Based on these figures, the relief program for UNRWA's 430,000 West Bank refugees cost \$10,750,000 during the year ending June 1967.

13. The UNRWA relief program provides food, shelter, and medical and welfare assistance for refugees living in camps. Camp services include construction, maintenance and repair of huts and tents; provision of sanitary facilities; operation of out-patient medical clinics; administration of primary and secondary schools; and management of specialized activities, including infant feeding and health services, daily issue of liquid milk, athletic and recreation programs for boys and girls, and literacy and vocational retraining for men and women. Funds have not been sufficient to permit the attainment of desired levels of training and rehabilitation. In May 1966, for example, only about 60,000 West Bank refugee children were receiving elementary education in UNRWA, government, and private schools.

14. UNRWA's basic rations provide 1,500 calories per day per person, 80 percent of which is derived from flour. These rations are supplemented by foods grown by the refugees or obtained by them through barter or purchase. In winter, UNRWA's basic issue is increased to 1,600 calories per day.

Agricultural Production

15. The West Bank was not able to feed its population before the Israeli occupation, and under existing conditions it is not likely that the Israelis can bring the area to a self-sustaining level even with a reduced population.

16. Wheat provides about half of the daily caloric intake for residents of the West Bank, and even in good agricultural years the West Bank has imported 50,000 tons of wheat. Local production may be cut by two-thirds or more in poor years as the average rainfall variability is about 50 percent.

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17. Olive oil, barley, and sugar provide one-fourth of the daily caloric intake. The olive crop is usually large enough to permit a sizable export. The output of barley is highly unpredictable, and the area experiences both surpluses and deficits. As much as 60 percent of total requirements may be imported on occasion. All of the sugar supply is imported.

18. The West Bank produced about 73 percent of Jordan's fruit and 42 percent of her vegetables. Some 26,000 tons of tomatoes and about 16,000 tons of watermelon are exported annually. Other crops entering the export trade have amounted to less than 4,000 tons annually.

19. The area produces enough food in a good agricultural year to provide for only an estimated 366,000* of the more than 600,000 persons on the West Bank, assuming present average levels of consumption (2,250 calories per day). Additional water is essential to increased productivity, but as yet there has been no indication that water will be diverted for West Bank consumption. The only major plan to provide water for the West Bank is the longstanding West Ghor Canal irrigation scheme, drawn up for the Jordanian Government. This project would draw water from the Yarmok River, presently controlled by the Israelis in southern Syria, by way of the East Ghor Canal through East Jordan. Even if this water is provided, the projected West Ghor Canal would irrigate only about 20,000 acres -- enough land to produce wheat to feed some 32,000 people.

* This figure is computed by dividing the wheat production of a good year (51,200 tons in 1966) minus waste and seed (2,680 tons) by the average yearly per capita wheat consumption (120 kilograms). These data are derived from the September 1967 Israeli census and from Paul G. Phillips The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, University of Chicago, 1954.

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Prospects For The Refugees

20. Should an Arab-Israeli political accommodation be reached tomorrow, the West Bank refugee problem would remain. A portion of the surplus population might be absorbed if modern agriculture and industry were developed -- a major task that involves the retraining of a tradition-oriented population. The majority of the refugees, however, have little potential for useful employment on the West Bank.

21. Even if refugees are permitted to migrate freely, the political climate and the congested labor market in neighboring Arab countries do not favor the absorption of the many thousands of refugees. In the absence of regional good will and cooperation, there is little likelihood of a realistic solution to the intricate problems of repatriating, compensating, or resettling an economically depressed and politically sensitive refugee population.

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